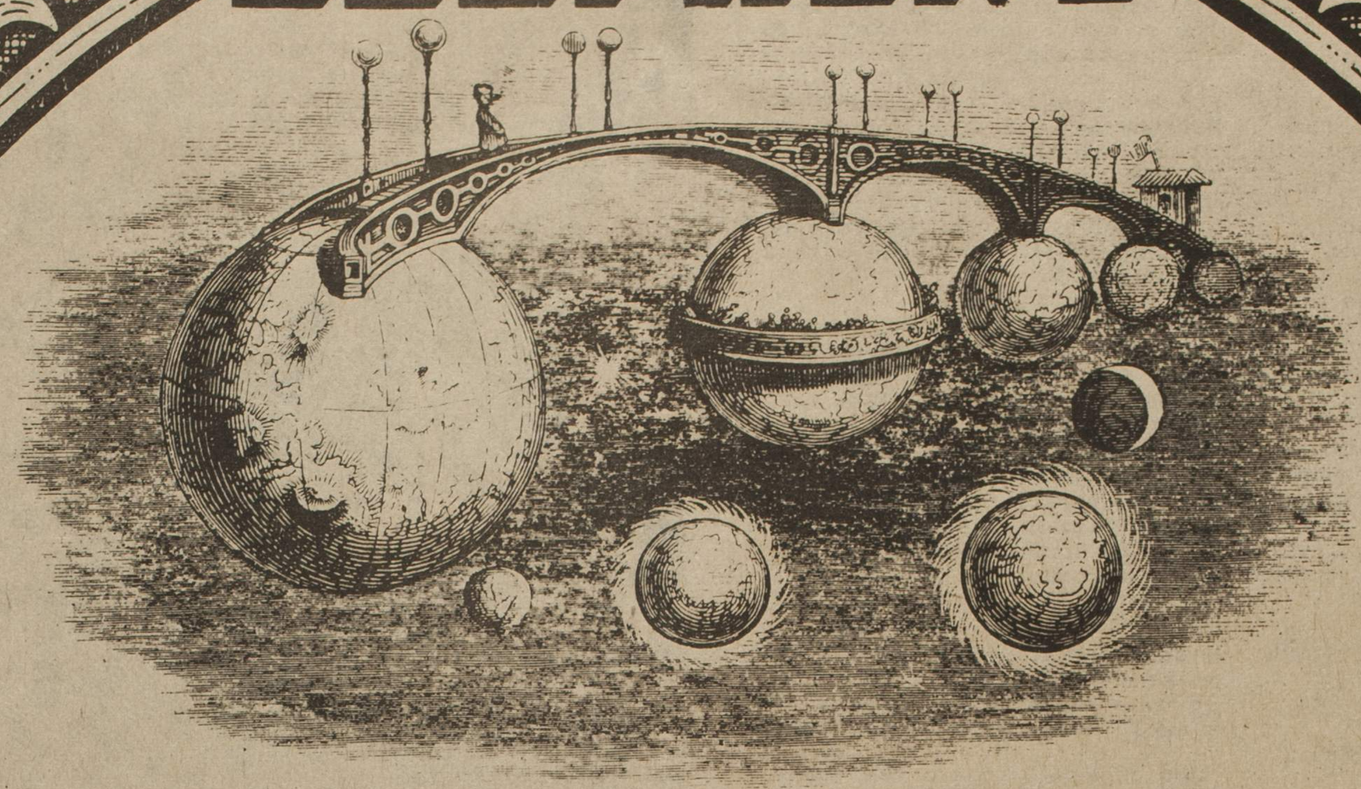
COOPNEWS



The Great Experiment!

BY SHIRLEY SCHEIER

The December Quarterly General Membership meeting started with a display by Thom Leonard about tofu. Thom is responsible for introducing miso, tofu, the sea vegetables, and sourdough bread in the store. He showed ways tofu can be prepared and used. More information will be given about other foods at the coop and where it comes from at future meetings.

The steering committee and the work collective made two requests for changes in the store and were passed by the general membership. Twenty more paid hours were requested for the work collective. For a year, the work collective has had 80 hours. During that time, sales doubled. These added hours will take the strain off the work collective and give them time to do some educational research.

The second change is the expansion of the cool room. Only one or two people can work together in the cool room now. The cool room is 400 cubic feet now and will be widened 310 cubic feet to allow more people to work at once. Approximate cost is $100.

The chicken debate was the most interesting and controversial topic of the evening. Coop eggs come from Volgast's chicken farm where they are free running and organically fed. After about two years the hens no longer lay eggs and must be slaughtered. Volgast has been selling these hens for dog meat but he asked the coop to buy them. A chicken-buying club was proposed. The chickens would be preordered and prepaid and would arrive on one day and would be in the store for 24 hours for pickup. They would then be given away to Penn House.

Strong and varying opinions were expressed about this proposal. Many people said that if we had the eggs in the store, we should be responsible for their source. So often in our society consumers take and take and never concern themselves with the source of the product, the waste and the detrimental effects on the environment involved. These are organically fed chickens and, if you were at the meeting, you know about the true confessions of carnivorous behavior. But some people did not want to see dead chickens in the freezer. Our store is an alternative food store, and many think it is mainly alternatives to meat. If dead chickens are the result of eggs, then possibly we should consider eliminating the eggs. The general feeling, though, was that by eliminating eggs we would be encouraging people to shop for the eggs at explotative big business. This also would eliminate an outlet for a small local farmer and organic eggs.

Finally, the membership decided to allow the chicken buying club with the provision that this was not a precedent for other meats to be sold in the store. It was also decided to have a general membership meeting January 25 to discuss political and economic attitudes about the food we eat and the coop.

The work collective reported that reorientation was successful. A large crowd of 50 people showed up at this meeting and people are much more aware about store policies. The work collective also presented a Contract Worker Training Program. This is an organized method to train people to run the store. After being trained, the person would be paid if extra help was needed. People can use this program to learn more about the store.

CONFESSIONS *of a* MEAT EATER

BY CHIP JONES

I've wanted to come out of the meat-locker for a long time. For years now, I've been hanging around protein-rich people whose consciousnesses have been raised far above the level of my putrifying stomach. I've shifted uncomfortably beneath that holy book on so many bookshelves, Diet for a Small Planet. I've suffered the torment of Judas as I crucified my soybean-soul, not on a cross, but rather on a pair of golden arches.

Up until now though, I've managed to lead the double life of a Coop member, and, God and Frances Moore Lappe forbid, of a meat-eater. The reason I'm making my confession is this: at the recent quarterly Coop meeting I heard others make their gut-wrenching testimonials --"I eat meat"--and I think it's time I made a clean breast of it. I hope you will profit and learn from my sordid tale.

I first encountered meat behind the tumbledown barn of my parents' summer cottage near Winchester, Virginia. They were Hindus and raised me in that strict tradition; so of course I had little first-hand knowledge of meat. Sure, we passed plenty of greasy spoons and hamburger hangouts, but after hearing my parents repeatedly say, "May those heathens drown in Yak bile," I came to regard such places as dens of iniquity.

But one day, during the summer of '59 I believe, my parents left me alone for a few hours with a local farm boy. Horatio Blight was his name. As soon as their Saab disappeared at the end of the long drive, he took me behind the barn and yanked a white paper bag from beneath his T-shirt. "Well," I thought, "that looks innocent enough." Little did I know.

"Look, Carny," hissed Horatio, "Hamburgers! Remember you were asking me what they were? Well, here's the real thing!"

I looked at him fretfully. Then I looked into the bag. Horrible brown lumps lay there, waiting.

"But won't these contaminate my eternal soul and ruin my chances for nirvana?" I said.

"Nah," he scoffed, "The worst you might get is a stomach ache."

That was my first bite of meat. I'll spare you the loathsome details of the many others.

At present I'm not an addictive meat eater. It's just that every so often, I get in the mood for a steaming heap of beef. But don't get me wrong. I'm not seeking approval of my actions. I know my drooling palate probably keeps millions of starving people from the grains they're entitled to.

I only ask that at the next Coop meeting all of us meat-freaks step out of the cold meat-locker and into the warm greenhouse. Maybe then we can form a group (Angus Anonymous?) and give each other support until that fine, golden-grain day when we get our heads and mouths out of the meat-sty and into the beet-sky.